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Manitoba
Disabilities Issues Office

Annual Report
2008-2009

Manitoba

MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Room 357
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3C 0V8

September 2009

His Honour the Honourable Philip Lee
Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba
Room 235 Legislative Building
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

May It Please Your Honour:

For your review, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Disabilities Issues Office of Manitoba for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

Gord Mackintosh
Minister

Manitoba
Disabilities Issues Office
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September 2009

Honourable Gord Mackintosh
Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities
357 Legislative Building
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the staff of the Disabilities Issues Office (DIO), I am pleased to present the 2008/09 Annual Report. The past year has been an exciting one for Manitobans with disabilities. Many improvements have been made to policies and important programs serving people with disabilities, and plans were put in place to chart a way forward.

Some of the most significant developments during the past year were:

1. Budget 2008/09 introduced a new Primary Caregiver Tax Credit of up to $1,020 a year. This initiative will be implemented in the 2010 tax filing year and recognizes the unpaid assistance provided to thousands of people with disabilities by family and friends.

2. The Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC) supported the development of new housing options for people with disabilities living in Winnipeg. Funding was provided to a community project in St. Boniface for the construction of 20 visitable homes. Also, with MHRC financial assistance, a display home including visitable features was built by a private developer in the new Waverly West subdivision.

3. New policies have been adopted by Cabinet to strengthen the ability of people with disabilities to receive accommodating customer service from government as well as to receive information in accessible formats. In addition, Cabinet endorsed the use of an Access and Inclusion Lens for use during the development of provincial policy and programs.

4. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities continued to be a priority for the DIO. An information session was organized on December 3rd International Day of Persons with Disabilities to raise awareness about its implications for Manitoba. It is expected that the Canadian Government will ratify the convention in the future.

5. Manitoba Family Services and Housing sponsored a multi-media campaign to promote the employment of people with disabilities. As well, a new Rewarding Volunteer Benefit for people with disabilities on social assistance was announced. This benefit of $50 a month will be provided for those who volunteer at least four times a month, and $100 per month will be provided for those who volunteer at least eight times a month.

6. The DIO coordinated two forums during the year focusing on safety for people with disabilities who live in the community. The one initial forum featured the Director of the Disabled Persons Protection Commission for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, who shared her jurisdiction's model to strengthen the security of people with disabilities.

The DIO looks forward to working with you and MLA assistant on disability issues, Jennifer Howard in the coming year; particularly as options are explored for a new disability strategy.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Martin
Executive Director

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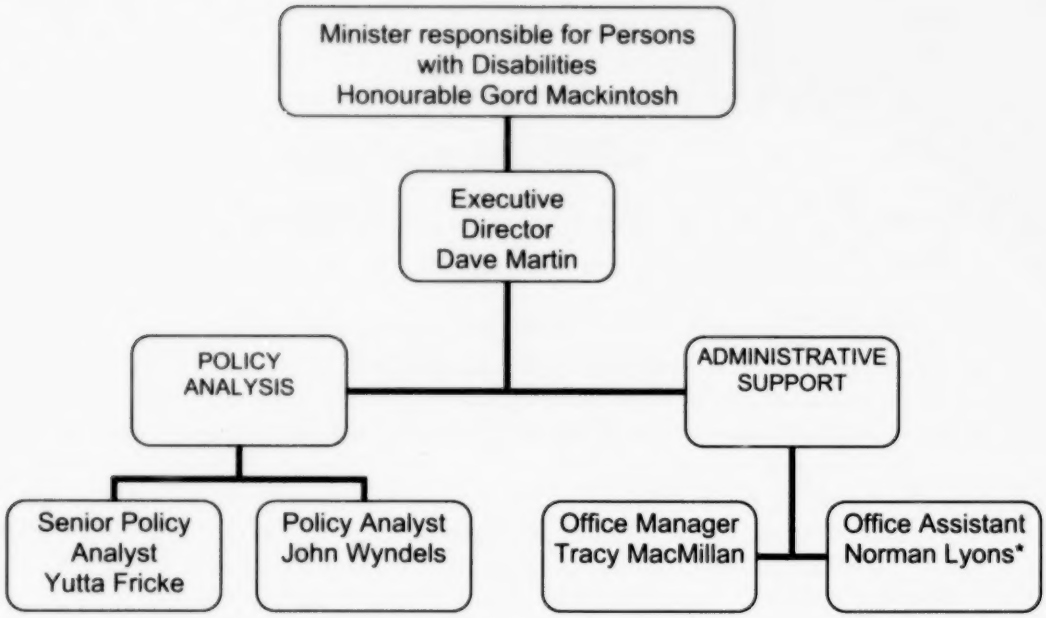
Disabilities Issues Office
Organization Chart
(as at March 31, 2009)



* Seconded from the Manitoba Housing Authority.

Introduction

The Annual Report of the Disabilities Issues Office (DIO) offers an overview of the progress made in 2008/09 on issues concerning people with disabilities. The report is structured around the integrated aspects of the DIO's work, including: the review or introduction of disability-related policies, coordination of cross-departmental initiatives, community engagement and a centre of disability expertise for government and the community. The report also contains information about the DIO's organization and expenditures. This report is available in multiple formats on request.

Mission and Role

In 2000, the Premier appointed a Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities to:

- identify issues affecting persons with disabilities
- co-ordinate policy development to improve access to public services
- promote positive attitudes and raise awareness about disability
- represent the needs of Manitobans with disabilities to other levels of government

In 2002, the provincial government established the DIO to serve and report to the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities. The DIO supports the Minister by:

- communicating directly with members of the community
- co-ordinating work among government departments, disability groups, corporate, and community organizations
- organizing community consultations with organizations and citizens concerned about new policy directions
- making Manitoba a more inclusive society for persons with disabilities

Manitoba's Policy Progress on Issues Concerning People with Disabilities

Manitoba Policy on Access to Government (MPAG)

On December 3, 2008, the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Honourable Gord Mackintosh, the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, announced the Manitoba Policy on Access to Government (MPAG). The policy ensures that persons with disabilities have equal access to government information, events and services through:

- promotion of disability accommodations
- designation and training of departmental disability access coordinators
- print and web access information campaign

MPAG is modeled on Manitoba's French Language Services Policy that is built on the concept of "active offer." This means that the Province will invite requests from people with disabilities for accommodations they need to access government information and services on an equal basis with their fellow citizens.

MPAG calls for the assignment of departmental Disability Access Coordinators (DAC) to coordinate the implementation of the policy. To support the DAC's in their work, the DIO organized 2 half-day training sessions for the 16 DAC's who have been appointed to date. The DIO provided DAC's with detailed resource manuals, brochures and posters to assist them in educating their departmental colleagues about the processes and resources available to facilitate access. Regular meetings and individual contact with the DIO will be maintained on an on-going basis.

The policy will be introduced throughout government in phases, beginning in 2009/10 in provincial departments, followed by implementation in other administrative bodies, such as Crown Corporations, in subsequent years. The DIO will report on its progress annually to the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities.

For further information on MPAG contact the DIO or go to the website: www.manitoba.ca/dio/access

Access and Inclusion Lens & Gender and Diversity Analysis

In 2008/09, DIO staff worked with the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) to ensure disability issues are considered as an integrated part of the analysis of TBS proposals and of Gender and Diversity Analysis (GDA) training. Some of the accomplishments were:

- The TBS *Developing Policy Proposals* guide was revised to include the disability Access and Inclusion Lens developed by the DIO. The aim is to ensure the full inclusion of Manitobans with disabilities at all stages of policy and program development. The lens is complemented by resource materials such as check lists.

- Training materials for Gender and Diversity were revised and used in government-wide workshops.

- A partnership was established with the Organization for Staff Development (OSD) to integrate the GDA training into on-going OSD training for civil servants.

- DIO staff was involved in three pilot projects in which diversity issues were address on a departmental level.

United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The aim of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is to stop discrimination against the 650 million people with disabilities across the world, and to ensure that they enjoy the full range of human rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural. The Convention provides direction in areas such as accessibility, personal mobility, health, education, employment, rehabilitation, and participation in political life. Canada has signed the Convention, but it has not yet been ratified, pending a full review of existing provincial laws, policies, programs and practices.

On December 3, 2008, the DIO celebrated the International Day of Disabled Persons by holding a half-day information forum on the Convention. Anna MacQuarrie, of the Association of Community Living (Toronto) offered an overview of the development of the Convention, in which organizations like her own were actively involved in the negotiations and drafting. Aaron Berg, of Civil Legal Services, reviewed process issues leading to ratification, and Sarah Lugtig,

of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, offered examples about how the Convention would impact the promotion of human rights in Manitoba.

The Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities indicated his support for the Convention at the forum by announcing that his newly appointed MLA assistant on disability, Jennifer Howard, would provide provincial leadership to promote the ratification of the Convention.

Future Cross-Departmental Disability Strategy

Since its inception, the DIO has been guided by *Full Citizenship: A Manitoba Provincial Strategy on Disability*. As outlined in our 2007/08 Annual Report, the Manitoba Government has in large part fulfilled the 35 individual commitments made in the 2001 Full Citizenship policy document. The time is right for a renewed commitment to Manitobans with disabilities.

On December 3, 2008, the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities appointed Jennifer Howard MLA assistant on disability issues to help develop a new strategy for Manitobans with disabilities. A short time later, Ms. Howard began meeting with the DIO and an expanded Family Services and Housing (FSH) policy team to set out its plan of action. The policy team's initial tasks were to review the many Round Table recommendations from the community and additional recommendations from government departments to set the direction for the way forward. The cross-departmental Assistant Deputy Ministers Committee on Disability assisted in ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive vision for future disability inclusion in Manitoba. By the end of the fiscal year 2008/09, the draft discussion guide for community engagement was near completion.

Inter-departmental Networking

The DIO provides advice to provincial departments on a broad range of policy issues affecting Manitobans with disabilities on an on-going basis. In 2008/09, some of the issues that were addressed include: employment, income, education, emergency preparedness and pandemics, protection from abuse, recreation, aging, visitable housing (including Waverley West Development), government access, and the disability service needs of specific population groups.

Some of the committees in which DIO staff participated were:

Career Development Advisory Committee
Civil Service Employment Strategy

Inter-Jurisdictional Protection Strategy Working Group
Emergency Management Organization
Equity and Ethics Planning Table Meeting (H1N1)
Wheeled Mobility Steering Committee
Working Group on Access to Government Buildings
Treasury Board Gender and Diversity Steering Committee
Waverley West Development Committee
Floodway Authority Recreation and Activity Committee
Joint Community and Government Members Committee on Disability-Related Employment and Income Assistance Issues

Some of the highlights of this collaboration are found below.

Inter-Jurisdictional Working Group on a Protection Strategy for Vulnerable Adults

Many departments share a common concern about the people who are especially at risk of abuse in our province, including Manitobans with disabilities. These play a variety of roles in prevention protection, intervention, follow-up and support. In February 2009, the DIO helped organize a Visioning Day to build a coordinated inter-departmental approach to safety and protection, beginning with a shared vision and strategic priorities.

The Visioning Day process affirmed the value of moving forward with coordinated planning for the protection of adults at risk of abuse in Manitoba. Subsequent to the Visioning Day, a small working group met to assess the outcome of the sessions and to determine the next steps. The outcome of this meeting was the creation of Inter-Jurisdictional Protection Strategy Working Group to review the mandates, target populations and resources of the bodies that serve Manitoba adults who are at risk of abuse. By determining gaps and overlaps in existing protection legislation and services, the working group will set the priorities for future coordinated strategies.

Manitoba Forum on Aging and Disability

The DIO collaborated with the Seniors & Healthy Aging Secretariat to organize a Manitoba Forum on Aging and Disability in March 2008. The purpose was to offer seniors and people with disabilities in Manitoba an opportunity to dialogue about the issues they face and the services they use to assist them in their daily living. Participants at the forum realized that, although they may see themselves as coming from different social groups, their needs and challenges are often the same or similar. In 2009, the report of the event was completed. Its purpose extends beyond a report of the discussions, to continue to build the dialogue among Manitobans with disabilities and that began at the forum.

Please contact the DIO for a copy of the report, or go to our website: www.manitoba.ca/dio

Manitoba Floodway Authority

Approaching its expected completion in 2010, the Red River Floodway will soon be capable of handling a 1 in 700 year flood. One of the opportunities stemming from the floodway expansion is in the area of recreation and outdoor activities. The Red River Floodway Expansion Project will attempt "to showcase how natural processes can be harnessed to create a greenway that is intentionally complex, changing, and improves with age."

An Operational Working Group (OWG) consisting of representatives of government departments, including the DIO and interested stakeholders in the community, worked with the engineering firm of Hilderman, Thomas, Frank, Cram to develop a concept plan that would realize the untapped potential of the floodway in terms of a number of areas including trees for tomorrow, grazing for farm animals, community gardens, and recreation. Community consultations were done in the summer of 2008 and a final Opportunities Concept Plan was submitted to the government for its consideration in the spring of 2009.

Waverly West Development Committee

They say, "small things can make a big difference." This observation holds true in housing: Through the incorporation of some minor alterations to landscaping and house design, a house can be made accessible to all people, regardless of their disability.

The main features of a "visitable" house are a level entry into the home, wider doors and hallways throughout, and an accessible washroom on the main floor. By utilizing these basic features, a home can become more functional, safer and usable for any family. Not only does it allow the home to be visited by friends and family who are aging or have disabilities, but it provides a housing option for those people wishing to buy a home that allows them to "age in place."

DIO staff participated in new provincial initiatives beginning in 2007, when 28 visitable townhouse apartments were developed at Flora Place in Winnipeg. At that time, the provincial government also supported the development of a show home in the Waverley West subdivision. Since then, 15 homes, or approximately 8% of the housing units in Phase 2 of the Waverley West, are scheduled to be visitable. There is a further commitment for approximately 8% of the houses in all future phases of Waverley West to be visitable.

Recent government initiatives, such as Age-Friendly Communities and Neighbourhoods Alive are projects based on the ideas of social inclusion and interaction. Their aims are to design vibrant communities that respond to the needs of all its citizens, recognizing the diversity of its populations and promoting the participation of those who live and work in them. Visitable housing responds to these values and helps create an environment that is inclusive to all.

Community Engagement

The DIO facilitates community engagement in government processes by acting as a liaison between government departments or officials and grassroots organizations and individuals. Sometimes this liaison service is by way of briefing officials about community concerns. In other cases, the DIO coordinates meetings of government and non-government representatives with a variety of perspectives on a priority issue. The DIO round tables and other community forums are examples of broad-based consultations with disability advocacy and service organizations. In addition to events organized by the DIO, staff are regularly invited to attend meetings and join committees initiated by community organizations or academics. Some 2008/09 examples of DIO community engagement are found below.

Safety and Protection of People with Disabilities

In May 2008, approximately fifty individuals from government, non-governmental organizations, the Winnipeg Police Service and the RCMP were invited by the DIO to discuss a common concern: How to keep people with disabilities living in the community free from abuse. During the one-day forum, participants learned about good practices and models for keeping people safe, both in Massachusetts and in Manitoba.

Ms. Nancy Alterio, of the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) in Massachusetts, described her agency's mandate to protect adults with disabilities from abusive acts and omissions of their caregivers through investigation, oversight, public awareness and prevention. Ms. Alterio noted that DPPC's 24-hour abuse hotline receives approximately 500 calls a month regarding disability related abuse and other issues. Unlike Massachusetts, in Manitoba, a number of departments and jurisdictions are charged with the protection of adults at risk of abuse, whether the live in residential care or at home. There are also numerous training programs and sources of intervention and follow-up support. Manitoba is guided by legislation and regulations, including the *Protection of Persons in Care Act* and the *Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act.*

To help determine gaps in Manitoba service, the afternoon session allowed participants from the community and government services discuss mock scenarios representing situations of abuse against adults with disabilities. At the conclusion of the day, participants agreed that coordination was essential in strengthening public education, services, legislation, and supports to protect adults at risk of abuse.

Disability in Emergency Management Network, DEM-Net

Initiated by the DIO in the spring of 2007, the Disability in Emergency Management Network (DEM-Net) is a grassroots network of disability organizations dedicated to promoting the involvement of Manitobans with disabilities in the systems and supports that impact their lives as a result of a disaster or emergency.

In 2008/09, the DIO continued to participate in the five-person steering committee of DEM-Net, as well as with the provincial Emergency Management Organization (EMO). Through its involvement, the DIO helped DEM-Net with its plans and projects and ensured that the EMO training of first responders included disability issues.

To expand DEM-Net's ability to train individuals with disabilities and first responders across the province, in 2008/09, the steering committee developed and successfully fundraised the DVD training tool, ***Meeting Functional Needs of Individuals During Emergencies***. Many thanks go to the DIO co-sponsors of the project , including: the department of Family Services and Housing, the Healthy Seniors and Aging Secretariat Office, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, the City of Winnipeg and its Access Committee. The diversity of the financing reflects the broad-based support DEM-Net enjoys among stakeholder agencies. This shared interest also assures the DIO/Province a broad audience for the training tool once filming is completed in 2009/10.

For more information about DEM-Net, please go to the website, which is situated in the ILRC website: www.ilrc.mb.ca. Included on the website, you will find a DEM-Net agency member profile, which was designed in collaboration with the EMO to ensure that first responders across the province can quickly access the disability expertise of DEM-Net members.

2009 Health and Wellness Conference

For the second year in a row, the DIO sponsored and helped organize the province's largest conference catering exclusively to disability issues; the 2009 Disability Health and Wellness Conference. The theme of this year's conference was "Gaining Momentum for Change."

The organization of a two-day conference requires an enormous amount of behind-the-scenes effort. A 15-person steering committee identified dynamic keynote speakers and oversaw the broad array of sessions addressing disability issues and concerns, such as: Disability in Emergency Management, Age-Friendly Communities, and Disability Rights and Legislation.

The Honourable Gord Mackintosh, Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, the Honourable Kerri Irvin-Ross, Minister of Health and Healthy Living, and Grand Chief Ron Evans, Grand Chief of Manitoba First Nations welcomed the 250 participants. Keynote speaker, David Lepofsky, has been a life-long advocate for people with disabilities. As one of the country's leading constitutional lawyers, he was instrumental in advocating for the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2001)* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (2005)* and is the founding president of the Canadian Association for Visually Impaired Lawyers. The day two keynote address was offered by Karen Tamley, Commissioner of the City of Chicago's Mayor's Office for Persons with Disabilities (MOPD). As a person with a disability herself, Karen Tamley dedicated her entire career to furthering disability rights and opportunities.

CCDS Visitable Housing Committee

The DIO continues to contribute to the visitable housing committee hosted by the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS). In the past year, the group has focused its efforts on a public education campaign to promote visitable housing by explaining the features and merits of this kind of housing design. Publicity included a billboard campaign on Winnipeg Transit, on-air interviews for Winnipeg radio stations, and stories in local and regional newspaper.

Information and Referral Service

Each year, the DIO fields over a thousand calls from people around the province with questions pertaining to disability issues. Sometimes the calls are for information related to the work of the DIO, but often the callers require details about specific government programs for persons with disabilities, such as the Employment and Income Assistance Program. The DIO then refers the individuals onto the agency or department responsible for administering the program. The inquiries fall primarily into the following ten categories:

- Disability Supports
- Health Care
- Financial Assistance
- Education
- Children's Services

- Housing
- Transportation
- Employment
- The role of the Disabilities Issues Office
- General Inquiries

In 2008/09, questions regarding financial assistance (EIA) and disability supports continued to dominate. These calls are an indicator of the important role the provincial government plays in many aspects of the lives of Manitobans with disabilities.

Financial Report Summary Information

Disabilities Issues Office
(Manitoba Family Services and Housing)
Actual vs. Planned Expenditures
for fiscal year ended March 31, 2009

2008/09 Annual Report $000	Sub-Appropriation Tables				
	Actual 2008/09	FTE	Estimate 2008/09	Variance Over/(Under)	Expl. No.
1H-1 DIO – Salaries	306	4.00	306	0	-
1H-2 DIO - Other Exp	105		103	2	-